

William Robinson who may well have been writing under the name of Jack Nastyface, a seaman, served on *HMS Revenge* in the early 19th century. Extracts of his essays are to be found in the book "**From the Lower Deck**" by **Henry Baynham** published by **Arrow Books ISBN 0 009 9065401**

Relative to the popularity of His Majesty's ships commanding officers, on page 78 of the paperback version, he wrote the following:-

Inevitably this was reflected, in the sailors' eyes, more in their captain than their admiral, but pride in having served under Nelson and hatred of a bullying captain are both evident in this description of the changes effected by a new commanding officer - the **Honourable Sir Charles Paget**.

On returning to Portsmouth, I learned that our captain had left, and another had taken command; I also found that a vast number of our men had run in consequence of our new captain having the character of being a tyrannical officer.

This self important nautical demagogue very soon set about not a reform, but a revolution on the ship. It had been a favourite mode with Lord Nelson to paint the side of all ships under his command with chequers, which made them to be distinguished with greater certainty in case of falling in with the enemy; and became a well known and general term in a squadron or fleet, so much so that, when speaking of any other ship, it was usual to say 'Oh! She's one of Nelson's chequer-players'.

The seamen liked the distinction, and took great pride in being considered a chequer player and could not wish to part with the name; but no sooner had this self-sufficient blusterer come on board and possessed himself of the reins of government, than he changed the paint of all the ship's sides from that of a chequer to a single stripe.

The character which came on board with him was quite sufficient to create dissatisfaction in the ship's company, but this single act caused so much disgust, that nothing was heard but execrations on his head; for it seemed as though he had studiously intended to blot out or rob them of what they considered as their 'badge of glory.' 'Ah', many might be heard to say, 'that fellow never liked the smell of powder, I'm sure, for it's a damned cowardly act and the greater the tyrant, the greater the coward; and if the signal was made now for him to engage the enemy, he'd lag astern.

No! He'll never be a chequer player, let him command for fifty years to come'.

This worthy, whose name was a terror to every ship's company he commanded, and was cursed from stern to stern in the British navy, now shines forth as an M.P and is always to be found at his post; and whenever the subject of impressment or flogging in the navy or army is brought forward in the House of Commons, he is ever ready with his Nero heart and famed for his skill in the support of this diabolical system.

Furthermore on Page 85 he writes:-

The Honourable Charles Paget was an M.P. of high birth and had great influence at headquarters and was fond of being placed near home. He was constantly taking a trip to London, whenever he pleased, leaving the command of the ship in the hands of the first Lieutenant, who was a tyrant on board, and was sure to be supported by this Captain who flogged every man that was reported to him by the said Lieutenant without enquiring into the complaint, for that would have been beneath his dignity as a man and an officer.

This sort of conduct had nearly brought the ship into a state of mutiny, and indeed many of our men ran away. He was so much the lofty high-spirited gentleman that he would not condescend to command the ship when he was on board, but would leave it in the hands of the Lieutenant, so that, as to the discharge of duty as an officer, he might as well have been on shore.

He was so independent and so much the man of pleasure, that he had never been through the ship to examine the state of it, or the crew.

He had his band on board to the amount of upwards of 20 persons, sending many prime seaman away and having this musical junto in their stead and thus weakening our force; for these worthies were excused from ship's duty; they were rated as Petty Officers or Able Seamen and received pay as such, whilst the men who were actually doing the ship's duty were some rated as Landsmen and others as Ordinary Seamen.

As a band these gentlemen were kept fully employed, for whilst he was indulging himself in the cabin with the importance of a great bashaw, they would be playing at the door; for the band and his dog drew all the attention, and seemed to be his sole delight.

He was pompous, proud, imperious, unfeeling and, of course, detested.